803 does not wish to be dirtied all the time. Misbehaving, relapsing infants are punished by pinching.

2. The Age of Experimentation: Infancy and Childhood.

855 The years after weaning, until about the age of seven can be described as years in which the attitude of Amhara parents and society toward the small children is "laissez-faire". This is partly due to the attitude that views childhood as a state of imperfection, letting the children grow with little supervision until they are old enough to perform economic tasks, but later training them in an authoritarian fashion, to make them grow into adults as quickly as possible, without an intervening playful adolescence.

A. The Stage of Infancy.

854 Once the mother has resumed wifely duties, infants are often cared for by their older sisters, who attend to their food, carry them, fondle them, but leave them considerable freedom to roam around the outside of the huts and nearby brooks, hills, fields, etc. They are permitted to get as dirty as they like, and are dressed in a single shift of threadbare rags which conceal nothing. They are not scolded for experimentation with objects, be they animate, inanimate, or their own bodies; unless they get in the way of adults and annoy them, whereupon they are simply pushed away. They are rarely punished, for they are regarded as not having attained the "age of reason", as "not yet trainable", as "urchins" ("kutara"), lighthearted infants.

Parents do fondle them, but not as regularly as before. It

857 boys and girls - for the sexes are not yet separated up to that
867 time - play "house" with considerable sophistication. For example, when they play "marriage", the "father" of the "bride" goes to the "elders" to inquire about the character of the "groom", after the groom's father has initiated the negotiations on the groom's request. They build a "marriage hut", and play at heavy drinking of barley-beer and honey-mead. The "bride" demands a gift from her new "husband", and enters into his "residence". After they have been in there a while, the two best-men, the "mizē", who had been duly sworn to protect her even against her husband, go off to the bride's parents to announce loudly and joyfully that the girl had proven a virgin! Whereupon the "mizē" are feted.

B. The Stage of Childhood, "Reason" Incipient Discipline.

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868
● 855 There is no special rite of passage that marks entry into the next stage, at about 5 for girls, about 7 for boys. But there is recognition, at this point, that the girls mature faster and are economically useful at a younger age than boys. Henceforth, girls
[291] play with girls, follow their mothers in their duties, (watch babies, fetch wood) and wear a more complete shift that covers them better; while boys play in boys' groups, follow their fathers, have regular duties assigned them such as taking cattle to and from pasture, and guarding the harvest against birds and baboons. Girl-children are addressed and referred to as "lɛja-zārād" (servant maid) for their duties are even more regular than those of
[858] the boys. Both sexes can now be asked in court to choose sides when their parents are being divorced and the guardianship is in question. For they have entered the "age of reason".

855 Neglect of duty is therefore punished, and a father may fly into a sudden rage, beat the child without waiting for an excuse, even hurl a firebrand at the offending boy, so that considerable injuries sometimes occur. Mothers discipline the girls in similar temperamental fashion. But the rage, in either case, is quickly forgotten. There is no pattern of cold discipline, no "woodshed" punishment, rather hot-tempered, quick retribution.

857 Play activity and imitation of adults continues, but it takes on more seasonal and constructive characteristics. This is partly due to the seasonal pattern of the economic activities of boys age 7 to 11 and girls 5 to 14. Formal education in church school rarely begins before 11 in the rural areas, whereupon their play activities become more "extra-curricular".

[526] The seasonal games include the ball game after the harvest is completed, known as "gencheb" or "kwas", and seasonal construction and repair activities. On the church feast of Mikael, little boys have their own outdoor party, eating barley roasted on the stalk, and watching the flirtatious play of adolescent boys and girls.

291 Boys 7 to 11 still wear the tattered, knee length cotton shift, as their basic garment in rural areas, but beg a new one from relatives once a year, for the holy day of "Mäsqäl", or "Timqät". But they are increasingly self-conscious about nudity, and if the tattered shift reveals the pubic area, other boys will haze and playfully beat the offender, saying:

[539] "My father told me not to let a snake warm itself in the sun".

865 In summary, parental discipline in this age group is specific,
867 work-oriented and intermittent; while experimentation with, and

855 867 socialization by the peer group continues more regularly and frequently and on a broader range of activities.

C. Training through the Peer-group; Patterns of Hazing.

867 Parental training during childhood is minimal, and much of enculturation is left to the peer-group which proceeds to function in little-structured fashion, largely through hazing.

Differential behavior of the sexes is largely taught this way. Little boys haze any boy who cries, or seems soft, "geltan", by darkly hinting that he "lacks something" ("täqämättälä"); and, if he is shy in talking and defending himself with his sharp tongue, "qämtalla", effeminate. To prove their physical bravery, boys burn scars ("täsasa") in their own forearms, saying that this will make them "strong", and believing that this will immunise them from showing pain or softness in public. An aggressive, clever [562] tongue, capable of a wide repertoire of insults that will shatter the adversary's composure, and also include appropriate milder and semi-strong insults, is regarded as male behavior, as "strong" or stronger than brawn. This makes a "known man" ("yätawäqa säw"). The proverb says:

[539]

> "The son of man, by what is he respected?
> by his seat (position)?
> Not by his seat -
> by his lip. (i.e. cleverness in argument)".

Boys are hazed by other boys for picking on little girls. Hazing is sometimes physical, sometimes by mockery, often both. If physical, it consists of shoving, wrestling, in spontaneous manner, almost never with cold formality. A boy who wants to grow up too fast beyond his peers, i.e. by showing too much preference for the company of elders, is criticized with the proverb:

874 studies to places in Begemdir province (Gondar), for "genyā" to Gojjam province. He stays there until he receives his certificate, to work as a "dabtära" scribe; if a persistent student he may try to obtain ordination into the priesthood, or, if lackadasical, make it a life-long occupation to go from school to school, begging his way, learning how to pursuade village women to give him food for a "blessing", and how to fend off dogs with a stout staff. Sometimes, when free food is scarce, he works at semi-skilled occupations such as basket-weaving and weaving sun-umbrellas, selling them at the market. Parents, fearing that this might be the outcome of his "education", discourage boys from leaving home and field.

872 874 The 3-year attendance at the local church school is regarded as highly desirable by both parents and the church, and most boys - but no girls - attend it. When the boy enrolled there has learned to read portions of liturgy or the Bible in the Geez language, chanting psalms and gospels out loud, the father rewards the priest-teacher by sending him a sheep or a goat, sometimes even an aged cow or old ox. The priests often charge their older students with teaching the younger ones, in exchange for special privileges.

855 Boys misbehaving, such as making errors or not fully participating in the chanting in unison, or asking questions considered impious, are punished immediately by twisting of the ear or slaps on the head.

The methods of teaching are frequent repetition of lessons, learning by rote, chanting of memorized lessons. Translation into Amharic is rarely taught at this level, and writing almost never (until very recently in some locations under central government influence). The priest-teacher usually exerts greater efforts toward

000 status.

181 776 The Amhara concern with spirits seems motivated not by the negative emotion of fear, but toward an understanding of the universe; toward healing; toward patterns of individual free enterprise under the guidance of protective spirits (regarded by the "zar" doctors and "zar" societies somewhat as patron saints).

181 Inventive intelligence, constrained in Amhara culture from developing material objects, applies itself to nonmaterial culture goals: to etiquette and other fine points of human relations; to speaking well in court; witticisms and proverbs; to entertaining with homiletic and riddles ranging from the ribald to the philosophic; to the development of special argots for the professions [871] of minstrelsy, medicine and commerce. Education is regarded by they Amhara as a highly desirable means to (non-material) achievement. The desire to be regarded as intelligent is even greater than the profit motive, in Amhara culture; so that there is greater fear of being mocked at than being bested in a trade exchange. Producers would rather undersupply a market than risk having to carry any goods back home. The worst mockery and insult is to be regarded as intellectually inferior.

855 C. Some Psychological Consideration: arising from the Life Cycle.

Infancy and childhood, until adolescence, are years of free experimentation for the young Amhara, years with a minimum of supervision by adults, and maximum exposure to training by the peer-group and slightly older youngsters. The child does not live in a world of giants, but learns to handle his (not very complex) universe 000 through the give-and-take of his age-mates. Until weaning, at the

854 Until weaning, at the
[853] age of two, the child is never removed from contact with the body of the mother or other female relative caring for him. After
857 weaning, childhood is an age of roaming over the countryside during the long dry season and of performing such useful tasks as protecting the harvest by shooting pebbles from slingshots at birds and baboons.

855 The pattern of punishment is dominated by spontaneity, during childhood as well as adolescence. A suddenly enraged parent (father or male elder) may hurl a firebrand at a child, or cuff him roughly about the head and shoulders for as long as the rage lasts. Sometimes real injury results, but there is no planned, coldly calculated punishment, and the anger is usually quickly forgotten. The youngster is never left in doubt when he has transgressed. Retribution comes within a split second. Parents do not hesitate to exercise their authority and to impose their wills, when angered. The youngster soon has a clear conception of what kind of behavior it would be wise to avoid. Thus the youngster is presented, gradually, with a set of values which early become rooted in his personality, and help him to remain, later in life, in tune with his social group and culture pattern.

554 Individuals who chafe at the status quo, notably women and/or
562 individuals of either sex who have a talent and urge for individual enterprise, often find their way into the "zar" cult. Cultural participation of the female is so restricted during her life cycle, that many emotional outlets are denied her. Monotonous daily routines of manual labor; two years of breastfeeding after every birth; denial of active participation in the church; derogatory views of female intelligence on the part of the males; etc., limit the Amhara women

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Egyptian mosques; youth dormitories and community houses in certain tribes in India; the academic and athletic youth organizations of ancient Athens and Sparta; not to mention the numerous teen-age associations of modern Western society.[3]

Here again, the adolescent Amhara is not involved in any such social forms. The advent of puberty is associated with the growing up and out of childhood groups, the gangs of shepherds who spend their days together in work and play. The girl of eleven or twelve is expected to spend all her time at home, under careful supervision. The boy of thirteen or fourteen has abandoned the shepherd's life for farming, in the company of older relatives, and soon becomes increasingly preoccupied with his private economic and erotic interests. His family elders are likely to warn him not to make friends with other youths outside the family.[4] For a number of adolescent boys to get together outside of festive occasions is, to the traditional Amhara mind, a sign that something wrong is afoot.

The absence of adolescent rites and age groups reflects the individualistic character of Amhara social organization, a subject to which we shall turn in chapter vii. Nevertheless, Amhara society catches young people in its grasp and guides them to adulthood just as firmly and surely as does a society which has many collective arrangements for its adolescents. It does this by means of a well-ordered program for growing up. The road from childhood to adulthood is one series of informal, unproblematic stages through which the growing person adjusts to progressively increased responsibilities and progressively detailed norms. After infancy, there is normally no break in continuity in the whole process.

Toward Adult Work Roles

Following a long and indulged infancy, the Amhara child is early taught the rudiments of work responsibility. At the age of three or four, children are given simple chores, such as shooing chickens from grain drying in the sun or collecting bits of firewood. Somewhat older children are expected to protect the crops against birds, farm animals, and baboons. The Amhara becomes apprenticed in the main vocation of his childhood—tending the herds—almost as soon as he can run about, and six-year-old shepherds play a crucial part in the Amhara economy.

Boys retain the responsibility for tending the herds at least until the age of twelve, but by then they have already been initiated into a number of adult work activities. At about eight or nine years the Amhara boy begins to do his share of the harvesting, sickling the wheat, barley, *tĕff*, or beans and loading the crops in piles he will help transport to the threshing place. He becomes adept at directing the cattle round and round the threshing floor and at winnowing the grain from the chaff. At times he helps with the weeding.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

The households are staffed with numerous servants and retainers, who make certain, for example, that the lord does not work in the garden or carry a package into the house from his car. Expectations of this sort of attendance are carried with the new nobility wherever they go. Similarly, members of the new nobility are frequently followed about, or waited for, by young relatives and other aspiring young men, who hope to establish a sort of civil master-retainer relationship and thereby secure a position, promotion, or loan.

The new nobility also attempts to instill in its children the refined manners and reserve of the old noble subculture. Some of the wealthiest have retained the tradition of private education, in its modern counterpart of sending their children abroad for secondary school or to private schools in Addis Ababa. They would like to control their children in the old fashion, but because of growing cultural confusion have in many cases assumed a more permissive stance. Thus their children increasingly run about freely, ignore traditions, and exhibit less fastidious manners.

Owing to their small numbers and the fact that they meet one another so often—at the palace and at social events like weddings—the members of the new nobility tend to be well acquainted with each other. They seem conscious of their status as a privileged stratum but do not form a solidary group. They divide into strongly competitive cliques, a division that itself tends to dissolve into the anxious struggle of each to maintain or improve his position at the expense of the others. The chief way to accomplish this has been to report something incriminating about another person—above all, something that impugns his loyalty to the Emperor. The consciousness of the new nobility has been dominated by the fear of arousing the Emperor's displeasure. The proximity of the throne—a phone call can summon anyone to report to the palace within ten minutes, reason unspecified—makes this a more formidable sanction than in previous generations.

How has Haile Selassie been able to prevent the new nobility from acquiring that relative autonomy of status and self-esteem which the old nobility formerly enjoyed? Why is it, despite the burgeoning of a new "power elite," that the question most earnestly asked by thoughtful Ethiopians and foreign observers for the past several years concerns a probable future "power vacuum"?

Sensitive to encroachment on his "absolute" authority by anyone else, Haile Selassie has kept his officials in a state of weakness through the strategy of his appointments. In this he has been inspired by the traditional methods of Abyssinian rulers who periodically assigned offices to different men through the process of *shum-shĭr*. Haile Selassie's policy has been to rotate officials in office every one or two years, in some cases after six months. This has prevented officials from acquiring a significant following in any one position. At the same time it has made certain that none of them will undertake any

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

ing support this permissiveness. If a baby is not suckled whenever he wishes to be, it is believed that he will become sick or will not grow strong, and the negligent mother is looked on as one of evil character.

Not only is the infant's desire to suck freely indulged, but it is indulged for a fairly long time. The normal period for breast-feeding is two to three years. Only if a new sibling happens on the scene is weaning deliberately effected. If another child is not forthcoming, and the mother is not ill, there is no inclination at any time to deny the child the breast. In many cases nursing continues until the child is four or five, when his work obligations begin to interfere.

The attitude of oral permissiveness is manifest in other ways. Thumb-sucking is accepted with good humor, and when a baby is in a bad mood he may be given his father's or mother's thumb to use as a pacifier. Though Amhara are otherwise very modest, mothers do not hesitate to offer the breast no matter where they happen to be. When referring to the process of breast-feeding, Amhara males invariably cup one hand under an imaginary breast to depict this common and natural event. When speaking to persuade a guest to accept a second glass of beer, the Amhara host has recourse to the formula: "But your mother's breasts are two!" Another indication that breast-feeding is a very familiar part of the Amhara's social environment is that in interpreting the TAT cards, a number of respondents interpreted some scene with children as a situation of breast-feeding, although this was not depicted on any of the cards.

The emotional context of breast-feeding is more significant than the physical pleasures involved. Until he leaves the breast the Amhara child inhabits an emotional paradise. He receives much attention and is fondled by both parents and by other relatives. He remains close to his mother at all times, sleeping alongside her at night and spending the day near her when not tied in a bundle on her back. He accompanies her thus to visit relatives, attend market, or go to church. Only when the mother goes to fetch water is he separated from her, for there is not room for both baby and water jug on the mother's back, and besides, water holes are the abodes of evil spirits who may try to make the child sick.

After he is weaned, the Amhara child enters a much harsher emotional atmosphere. He must adjust to a regime of commands, responsibilities, and punishments. He is nostalgic forever after for the warmth and security of his earliest years, a condition vividly associated with the experience of sucking at the breast. The prominence in Amhara culture of this association of emotional security with breast-feeding is shown by such phenomena as the mammary symbolism of the rooftop and the institution known as the "breast-father." The former consists of a clay ornament, whose color and shape clearly replicate the female nipple, which is placed atop the breast-like conical roof which

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

covers the Amhara home.* The latter is related to customs concerning adoption.

The adoption of children among traditional Amhara takes place through a ritual in which the child sucks the honey-dipped thumb of his intended foster parent. The latter thereby becomes the child's *ṭuṭ abbāt*, or breast-father. In some cases the child actually sucks the nipples of the *ṭuṭ abbāt*. Used metaphorically, the image of sucking someone's breast is employed to indicate becoming close to, or ingratiating oneself with, a superior; breast-feeding is so explicitly connected with emotional security that people are inclined to allude to it when finding a new source of security.

The Amhara's attachment to passive, pleasurable activities centering on the oral zone appears in a wide variety of forms. Manipulation of the lips is one of these. Amhara often stand about fingering their lips or rubbing them against some object, much as people in another culture might scratch their heads or stroke their chins. Children may be humored by having their lips played with by a relative. The frequent covering and uncovering of the mouth with a part of the toga, that is so characteristic of the Amhara, may be a sublimated form of this.

The lips are used in Amhara culture for a variety of expressive purposes. The Amhara identify persons and places, not by pointing with the finger or hand, but by distending the lips in a certain direction. Kissing, while seldom used for romantic purposes, serves a number of other expressive functions. Relatives or friends of either sex kiss each other on both cheeks after a long separation, the older or superior in status kissing first. Children and servants greet their superiors by kissing their feet, which they also do to show gratitude for some favor. One kisses one's own hands before extending them to receive a gift. Kissing one's fingers is done to signify an oath or a special appreciation of something, the meaning being "I swear by it."

Religious sentiment is typically expressed through kissing. The devout Amhara kisses his fingers and touches the table to show thanksgiving after a meal. The church is greeted by kissing a part of the building, and going to church is referred to as "kissing the church." Following devotional services the priest's cross is kissed by all present, and often the Holy Book is kissed as well. When the ark is brought outside on holidays, reverence is shown by falling to the ground and kissing the earth.

While, moreover, romantic kissing is an uncommon activity among the Amhara, Amharic literature at times represents this activity with poignant intensity. Thus, in an unwritten Amharic couplet one hears:

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* The Gurage, by contrast, place a straight stick atop their homes. So do the Amhara of Gojjam Province.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*121 Amhara society as marked by a moderately high degree of independence.
181 This is to say that Amhara society gives relatively wide rein to individual impulse in action. It is not to say that Amhara culture places a high value on the moral worth of the individual personality. That is a separate question, which we shall now proceed to explore.

INDIVIDUALITY VERSUS CONFORMITY AND ANONYMITY

*121 The extent to which individual personality is valued in a society is reflected
181 primarily in two aspects of its culture. One of these comprises its processes
156 of education, in the broadest sense of the term; the other, its forms of art. The character of these aspects of culture reveal, respectively, the degree of concern for the *development* of an individualized self and the degree of concern for the *expression* of an individualized self.

Education and Socialization

*121 Obedience and politeness are the overriding goals in bringing up children
155 among the Amhara. After a prolonged and indulged infancy, the Amhara
861 child from about three years on is subjected to a regime of discipline and
867 repression. He is taught to fulfill without question any request made by any
[854 older person. He is conditioned to stand quietly whenever guests are present and to stand facing the wall while his parents or guests eat their dinner. If addressed by elders, especially those outside his immediate family, he is expected to reply in a barely audible whisper—a norm that is sometimes adhered to with such pathetic faithfulness that it has become the object of gentle satire in a short story by the young Ethiopian writer, Tadesse Liban.[26] Children who are noisy and disrespectful are referred to contemptuously by the term *bālagē*, meaning "rude."

*121 The desires and interests of an Amhara child are not taken into account
155 by those who raise him. He is provided with a bare minimum of clothes,
855 and little effort is expended in procuring him playthings,[27] although in some
524 families little dolls made of rags (*ashāngulit*) are produced. Children have
*121 a rich play-life with their peers, but this consists mostly in imitating various
155 adult activities. Organized games occur very rarely, the chief one—*gannā*—
857 being played as a rule but once a year, on Christmas Day.[28] The traditional songs and dances are learned from other children while tending the herds, but children are not encouraged to perform them in front of adults. The
*121 opinions of children are never expressed, let alone consulted. Indeed, in some
155 commoners' families the children are treated little better than the farm ani-
855 mals, if that well. One occasionally sees a peasant woman or servant directing
858 her child to perform some chore by throwing clods of dirt or manure at him

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

in the same half-interested manner in which the shepherd directs cattle by throwing stones.

The effect of Amhara socialization, then, is to inhibit rather than to stimulate the development of individuality. The spirited and expressive Amhara child of two or three is conditioned to become, for the rest of his childhood and to a large extent throughout life, taciturn, fearful, and slightly morose.

The traditional system of formal education is no less indifferent to the personality of the learner. The atmosphere of the schools where reading is taught is harsh and punitive. Pedagogy at all levels of instruction is based on repetition and memorization, with strict adherence to the conventions preferred by the teacher.* The traditional ban on the teaching of writing may also be related to the desire to keep the student's mind on received formulations. Amhara formal education in no wise seeks to cultivate the individual, but aims solely to prepare cultural specialists who will be able to perform the rituals and perpetuate the teachings of the Ethiopian Church. The instruction of noble children, finally, in the arts of riding, swimming, shooting, and playing the lyre has more to do with the transmission of the manners and skills appropriate to a position of high status than with a concern for personal development.

Music and Art

Music and dance are greatly enjoyed by the Amhara, but little attention is given to the cultivation of their forms or the refinement of their performance. The music is monodic, both melodically and rhythmically, and, except for some intricately structured accelerandos in certain religious hymns, consists chiefly in the indefinite repetition of a number of very limited musical ideas. Dance forms are still more limited and repetitive. In both genres, variation and the development of personal styles are not encouraged. Innovation, particularly in religious forms, is likely to meet strong resistance; witness the vigorous rejection of Alaqā Gabra Hānnā's innovations in dance by the masters at Gondar.

Like music and dance, Amhara design provides little scope for the free play of imagination. In pottery, basketry, and even in such antique ornamentation as appears on the coins and stelae of Aksum and the churches of Lalibela, the recurring style is that of the continuous repetition of simple geometric patterns. Painting provides a richer medium, but here again individuality is carefully constricted. The subject matter of pictures is limited by tradition to scenes concerning the life of Christ and the saints, and to the *res gestae* of emperors. The manner of treatment of these themes is

* A partial exception to this—the teaching of *qenē*—will be discussed below.

is considered a potential, but not immediate danger following excision. If an ankar korac ("tonsil cutter") is also a kusil herbalist, he may smear a prophylactic unguent over the face of the excision, but prophylaxis is not generally given. Even when kusil does occur (the syndrome known as yiankar mokusil), it is expected to regress either without any treatment, or by benefit of a commonly known herbal infusion. A young child is considered too small and frail to endure this operation and the subsequent period of increased vulnerability to gerifta and kusil. In such cases, the child is given a palliative to drink; in addition, a portion of the ingredients used in the drink is prepared as an unguent, and rubbed onto the affected area, against that time when the child will be old enough to withstand the operation.

The dental wogeysa is known as a "yiters medhaniyt awlakiy". As with other wogeysa-treated ailments, toothache can be traced to multiple causes, whose identification is only marginally important to the practitioner. Toothache is caused either by sun-borne gerifta or by an intrusive worm whose presence is made apparent by the caries it bores out. The ultimate and most successful therapy of the yiters medhaniyt awlakiy is extraction, with the use of European dental pliers. Because of the pain associated with this operation, laymen often